

I agree with Howard Dean when he says in "Take Our Airways Back" that: Last week, communications giant Sinclair Broadcasting announced that they would require all 62 of their television affiliates to pre-empt regularly scheduled programs and air a film that casts Sen. John Kerry in a very unfavorable and false light. Many of these stations, affiliates of ABC, CBS, NBC and UPN, are in battleground states like Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan. This essentially becomes free advertising for the Bush-Cheney campaign in some very important and influential states during this election season. This is not the first time Sinclair Broadcasting stations were required to do something that advanced the right-wing agenda. Last spring, Sinclair refused to allow any of its ABC affiliates to carry a Nightline episode that honored soldiers who had been killed in Iraq. The episode was a way to memorialize and remember the soldiers that gave their lives fighting for our country. But at the time, the executives at Sinclair Broadcasting unilaterally decided that the program "appears to be motivated by a political agenda designed to undermine the efforts of the United States in Iraq".

This election cycle, executives of Sinclair Broadcasting have contributed tens of thousands of dollars in political contributions, 97 percent of which have gone to Republican candidates. Their vice president for corporate relations and their spokesperson, Mark Hyman, is also a conservative commentator for Sinclair Broadcasting. Every day a one-to-two minute report by Hyman is distributed to stations that promotes the agenda of the Republican Party.

Incidents like this are not good for America. Today the Democratic candidate for president is victimized. In the future, it may be a Republican.

Federal Communications Commissioner Michael J. Copps recently said, "This is an abuse of the public trust. And it is proof positive of media consolidation run amok when one owner can use the public airwaves to blanket the country with its political ideology -- whether liberal or conservative. . . .Sinclair and the FCC are taking us down a dangerous road."

Kowtowing to large corporations, like Sinclair Broadcasting, is President Bush's specialty. And, behavior like this will only continue to grow by other media conglomerates if President Bush is re-elected. He is clearly more interested in doing the bidding of big corporations than he is in jobs and health care for ordinary Americans.

The media needs to be re-regulated and corporate ownership of media outlets needs to be limited in favor of independent and local family ownerships. But, we can make a difference today. If you live in a city with a Sinclair Broadcasting station, I encourage you to consider calling companies that advertise on that station. This is already working in some cities, like Madison, Wis. - a restaurant that was advertising

on the local Sinclair Broadcasting station received numerous complaints and decided to pull their advertising.

Since the public owns the airways, Sinclair Broadcasting and other big corporations ought to be required to act in a way which supports democracy, not attacks it. Sinclair Broadcasting has violated the fundamental responsibilities they are accountable for in a democratic society. If the president will not do his job to rein in corporate power, we will have to stand up for American democracy ourselves.